

## Appleton company growth fuels regional economy

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**Abstract:** Backer is president of C3 Corp., which recently was selected by Lexington, Ky.-based Tempur-Pedic to construct two laminating lines for the mattress maker's new 800,000-square-foot plant in Albuquerque, N.M. To celebrate the contract, C3 Corp. gave its 22 employees gifts of pillows made from patented viscoelastic material, originally developed for NASA.

**Full text:** Bruce Backer and his co-workers may be enjoying a better night's sleep due to their employer's business success.

Backer is president of C3 Corp., which recently was selected by Lexington, Ky.-based Tempur-Pedic to construct two laminating lines for the mattress maker's new 800,000-square-foot plant in Albuquerque, N.M. To celebrate the contract, C3 Corp. gave its 22 employees gifts of pillows made from patented viscoelastic material, originally developed for NASA.

"We bring technology to manufacturers, and we beat out overseas manufacturers to win this contract," Backer said.

C3 Corp.'s manufacturing solution for Tempur-Pedic resulted in a four-station laminating and cutting line that uses 66 percent less floor space, reduces waste and increases production flexibility.

"We're driving local and regional businesses to grow because of our national and international client base," Backer said. C3 Corp. has clients in the United States, Canada and Europe.

C3 Corp. picks from a regional pool of five machining, three welding and three painting companies to subcontract work on any project. Engineers, who take at least two years to become proficient in the firm's design software, make up about 80 percent of C3 Corp.'s workers. The company expects to have 31 employees by December and 48 by the end of 2006, Backer said.

Engineering services is only one of three areas of expertise that C3 Corp. provides clients. The company creates custom machines that often use robotics, as well as integrated information systems.

One C3 Corp. client that makes hydraulic hoses for off-road equipment couldn't find a way to lower costs and increase production. Facing stiff competition, the U.S. company was considering moving their assemblies off-shore.

"We designed a machine that automates the (manufacturing) process allowing them to produce more product from the same workforce," Backer said.

In 1994, Joe Van De Hey founded C3 Corp. as Control Concepts Corp. to provide manufacturers and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) solutions to systems integration.

Before launching his own company, Van De Hey had worked in various manufacturing positions primarily in the paper processing industry.

"I started the company because I felt that (we) could make a difference in manufacturing and put the project first," Van De Hey said.

C3 Corp. plans to occupy a new \$1.8 million, 18,000-square-foot facility in Appleton's Northeast Business Park by August. Wisconsin recently approved C3 Corp.'s application for \$250,000 in tax credits under the Technology Zone program to help with the project.

"Our strengths start with our approach to supporting our customers," Van De Hey said. "We provide turnkey solutions to solving manufacturing issues."

With the paper industry comprising about 90 percent of C3 Corp.'s business, the firm is seeking to diversify its client base.

"Our goals are to stay on course and continue to align C3 with our customers, understanding their pain and then work together to address their manufacturing needs," Van De Hey said.

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A closer look

C3 Corp. (formerly Control Concepts Corp.)

Location: 3116 North Pointer Road, Appleton. Moving in August to a new location at 3300 E. Venture Drive, Appleton.

Owners: Joe Van De Hey, founder; Bruce Backer, president; Marvin Wall, vice president, operations

Founded: March 1, 1994

Number of employees: 22

Focus: Custom machines, engineering services, information systems

Gross annual sales: \$8 million

On the Web: [www.c3ingenuity.com](http://www.c3ingenuity.com)

**Subject:** Pulp & paper industry; Systems integration; Manufacturing; Manufacturers; Information systems;

**Publication title:** The Post - Crescent

**Pages:** E.3

**Publication year:** 2005

**Publication date:** Jul 3, 2005

**Year:** 2005

**Section:** Fox Valley Inc.

**Publisher:** Gannett Co., Inc.

**Place of publication:** Appleton, Wis.

**Country of publication:** United States

**Source type:** Newspapers

**Language of publication:** English

**Document type:** News

**ProQuest document ID:** 437422530

**Document URL:** <http://search.proquest.com/docview/437422530?accountid=9060>

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**Last updated:** 2012-12-30

**Database:** Post-Crescent, The

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